

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510 - 3505

October 14, 2022

Mr. Louis DeJoy,
Postmaster General and CEO
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW
Washington, DC 20260

Ms. Tammy Whitcomb Hull
Inspector General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW
Washington, DC 20260

Dear Postmaster General DeJoy and Inspector General Whitcomb Hull:

Recent reporting indicates a surge in postal robberies throughout Ohio.¹ Sadly, I fear that these robberies are enabled by the United States Postal Service's (USPS) misguided decision to halt the practice of having Postal Police Officers (PPO) – members of the nation's first and oldest federal law enforcement agency – patrolling along mail carrier routes and around USPS collection boxes. This decision is making mail carriers and the communities they serve less safe, and must be reversed.

Over the past year, USPS mail carriers across Ohio have been the victims of brazen armed robberies in Norwood,² College Hill,³ Covington,⁴ Madeira,⁵ Cincinnati,⁶ Columbus,⁷ Cleveland,⁸ Groveport,⁹ Beachwood,¹⁰ Trotwood,¹¹ and Dayton.¹² This appears to be an organized criminal effort,¹³ where mail carriers are targeted for their “universal” arrow keys that can open multiple USPS collection boxes. The contents of the mailboxes are stolen and later sold online – costing Ohio residents millions.^{14,15} According to an internal USPS memo, there has been a 400 percent increase in postal robberies since 2019.¹⁶

It is my understanding that the USPS's Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) reinterpreted the PPO's jurisdiction over “postal property” and as a result restricted the presence of PPOs to postal facilities while prohibiting them from patrolling mail carrier routes.¹⁷ Prior to this directive, PPOs routinely escorted mail carriers in locations with higher risk of postal robberies. This new directive is akin to saying that PPOs – a federal uniformed police force – are not meant to protect mail carriers and the integrity of mail delivery, only federal USPS buildings.¹⁸ This is contrary to the Service's account of its own history which notes the role played in protecting mail carriers and routes. Specifically, USPIS's history details how the service “supervised the transportation and delivery of mail to union troops.”¹⁹ In fact, so clear was the duty to protect the delivery of mail, that in 1954, “Post Office Inspectors” were renamed “Postal Inspectors,” to “reflect the

relationship to all phases of postal services and the U.S. Mail, instead of only to post offices.”²⁰ Similarly, after the Postal Police Officer security force was created in 1970, they were named officially “Postal” not “Post Office” Police Officers in 1981 since they were “responsible for protecting people and property.”²¹

Last December, the National Association of Postal Supervisors called on USPS to restore PPO field operations, given the staggering one-year increase of over 7,000 reported violent crimes against postal employees.²² As others have noted, the higher incidence of postal robberies and mailbox theft has hindered the delivery of benefits and supplies American families rely on. When Americans cannot get their medication, merchandise, Social Security checks, and notes from loved ones, the USPS must act.

Recent research suggests that the August 25, 2020, policy change coincides with the rise in mail theft cybercrime cases.²³ There has been a documented increase in the online market for stolen checks, from more than 100 checks stolen nationwide in one week in 2020 to 2,000 per week in 2022.²⁴ In January 2022, more than 500 checks were stolen from Ohioans and posted for sale online. This makes Ohio the nation’s fourth largest hot spot for postal robbery cybercrime, after Texas, Florida, and New York.²⁵

At the time of the 2020 decision to bench federal PPOs, the Wall Street Journal noted it was “too early to know if the order will affect mail crimes.”²⁶ Now, more than two years later, we know that the order has led to more mail crimes.

Postal robberies and mail theft are federal crimes, and federal police officers should patrol postal carrier routes. That responsibility should not be pushed onto overwhelmed local law enforcement personnel. It is imperative that the USPS reverse its wrongheaded decision and immediately restore the patrolling functions of the Postal Police Officers.

Please provide my office a response on this matter within 30 days.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Cc:
Chief Postal Inspector, Gary R. Barksdale

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²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Id.*

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²⁴ Halperin, Eric. August 30, 2022. "Ohio sees mailbox thefts as a growing concern." WCMH. Retrieved:
<https://www.wtrf.com/ohio/ohio-sees-mailbox-thefts-as-a-growing-concern/>

²⁵ Gillum, Jack. March 28, 2022. "Signed, Sealed, Snatched." Bloomberg News. Retrieved:
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²⁶ Smith, Rebecca. October 16, 2020. "U.S. Postal Service Benches Its Police Officers Before Election." Wall Street Journal. Retrieved: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-postal-service-benches-its-police-officers-before-election-11602862096>